

Position Statement:

**The Delivery of Preventive and Primary
Reproductive Health Services
In School-Based Health Centers
Executive Summary**

The Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care (CASBHC) promotes access to comprehensive health services for adolescents. Where there is a significant documented need to reduce the prevalence of at-risk behaviors and incidence of sexually-transmitted disease among adolescents, School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) should meet that need through providing preventative and primary reproductive health services. These services include human sexuality education, behavioral risk assessment, counseling, pregnancy testing, contraception or referral for contraception, and diagnosis and treatment of sexually-transmitted infection. Ultimately, the goal is to keep students healthy, in school, and ready to learn.

In Colorado, about 30% of high school students report being sexually active. Although there has been a decline, teenage pregnancy is pervasive. Every four hours, a baby is born to a Colorado teen between 15 and 17 years of age. Colorado has the 22nd highest teenage pregnancy rate among the 50 states. Pregnancy is the main reason adolescent girls drop out of school.

Children born to a mother 17 years of age and younger cost Colorado taxpayers at least \$167 million in 2004. Children of teen mothers often have poorer health, more developmental delays, and are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. Studies show that, as children of teen mothers age, they are predisposed to dropping out of school, obtaining low-skilled employment, being incarcerated, and becoming teen parents themselves.

In addition, studies show that persons who engage in sexual activity at a young age often have multiple sexual partners and frequent sexual encounters. Both behaviors can be attributed to increased risk of contracting sexually-transmitted infections (STIs). Some STIs have painful and long-term consequences including birth defects, blindness, cancer, heart disease and death. STIs can also lead to infertility, ectopic pregnancy and long-term emotional suffering and stress.

Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance in providing medical care to adolescents. Teens are more likely to share important health-related information with trusted adults. SBHCs are bound by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) which regulates who can access medical records and personal health information and what information can be disclosed. Because Colorado allows minors to consent to reproductive health services, patient consent is required for parents to access their child's medical records under HIPAA. However, SBHC clinicians encourage adolescents to engage in open dialogue with their parents/guardians about all aspects of their health care.

Each school district in Colorado that hosts a SBHC determines, in conjunction with a community advisory board, what services are offered. This determination is made based upon the age of students served, documented need, other community resources, and available funding. When a SBHC serves adolescents, when a need exists, and when funding is available, reproductive health services should be included in the delivery of comprehensive health services to adolescents.

To learn more about CASBHC's position statement, go to the CASBHC website at www.casbhc.org and search the publications or go to: <http://www.casbhc.org/publications/Reproductive%20Health%20Position%20Statement.pdf>